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ABSTRACT

In addition to describing how training programs for African refugees fail to meet the needs of women (who along with children are the majority of refugees), this document offers guidelines for improving the programs and, thus, the productivity and incomes of women refugees. The first section, called "Women Refugees: The Overlooked Majority," describes problems with current training programs. The second section, "Selected Experiences," reviews a sample of training projects in Somalia, the Sudan, Zaire, Djibouti, Lesotho, and Kenya that are either designed exclusively for women or that include training services for women. Section three relates some common findings among programs. Guidelines for improving refugee training programs are provided in the fourth section, and a list of 18 references concludes the document. The guidelines include suggestions to conduct needs assessments regularly because needs change from those of urgent survival to those that emerge in more stable situations; provide child care for trainees; select the training objectives that the women trainees support; consider supporting small scale enterprises in areas where long-term business development is not relevant; and offer training only for occupations that are in demand, including those considered to be nontraditional for women. (CML)

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TRAINING POLICIES

Discussion Paper No.26

VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR WOMEN REFUGEES IN AFRICA: GUIDE-LINES FROM SELECTED FIELD PROJECTS

by

Eve Hall

Note: Discussion papers are preliminary material circulated to stimulate critical discussion and critical comment.

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PREFACE

There is mounting pressure to move beyond emergency relief for refugees to identify "durable solutions" - programmes designed to develop the skills and productive activities of refugees to bring much-needed income and reduce their reliance on external aid. As in the majority of conventional development assistance in Africa over the last two decades, women are regarded as a separate group which plays a secondary role within the productive organisation of the family and the refugee community. As a result, assistance is skewed towards male household heads and the resulting effectiveness of such developmental work is greatly reduced.

This paper attempts to show how from the very outset, programmes to improve levels of skill and productivity fail to meet the needs of women refugees. Since the majority of refugees in Africa are women and children, the implications are devastating. The author bases much of her analysis on first-hand experience working with women refugees in Africa. We hope the paper will provide useful guide-lines for others engaged in programmes aimed at improving the productivity and incomes of women refugees.

Table of contents

		Page
PREFACE		iii
I.	WOMEN REFUGEES: THE OVERLOOKED MAJORITY	1
	Programme assistance: What has gone wrong?	2
	Time	7
	Skills	7
	Cultural constraints	8
	Lack of information	8
	Lack of participation in decision-making	9
	Loans	9
	Counselling and extension services	10
II.	SELECTED EXPERIENCES	10
	Somalia	12
	The family life programme	12
	An ILO project	14
	The Action Aid project	16
	The Sudan	18
	The ILO/UNHCR programme for income-generating activities	19
	The Port Sudan small-scale enterprise development programme	20
	Zaire	23
	Djibouti	24
	Lesotho	25
	Kenya	27
III.	SOME COMMON FINDINGS	29
IV.	SOME GUIDE-LINES	35
	Information	35
	A comprehensive approach to needs assessment	36
	Women's participation in project design	36
	Mutual objectives	36
	Partial aid	37
	Training	37
	Employment opportunities	37
	Credit	37
	Counselling and extension services	38
	Women refugee's organisation	38
	Co-ordination of training and income-generation schemes	39
	Time allocated for project implementation	39
	Programme delivery	39
	Training materials	39
	Transferring knowledge	40
REFERENCES		41

I. WOMEN REFUGEES: THE OVERLOOKED MAJORITY

The majority of refugees in Africa are women and children. This fact is constantly reiterated for purposes of fund-raising, to stress the need for generous assistance to large numbers of helpless people who are at the mercy of forces completely outside of their control. Yet it is a fact which is generally disregarded when refugee-assistance programmes beyond the emergency phase are designed. In other words, publicity stresses a basic situation which aid policy then largely ignores.

Most particularly when there has been a large influx of refugees over a short period of time, adult women refugees outnumber adult men, both in organised receiving and holding camps and in spontaneously settled encampments. Whether the reason for a refugee influx is war or natural disaster such as drought, it is the women who are forced to flee to a place of refuge with their children and other dependents, while many men separate themselves at least temporarily from their families, either to fight in the war or to seek employment elsewhere, unencumbered. As a result, many refugee households, whether rural or urban, are headed by women. In Somalia, for example, where approximately half a million refugees are sheltered in over 30 refugee camps, it was estimated in 1981 that women constituted 30 per cent of the refugee population, and children under 15 years, 60 per cent. Of the 10 per cent men refugees, many were old or handicapped. In the Sudan, in the same year, 40 per cent of the refugee households spontaneously settled in Port Sudan over the previous ten years were headed by women. In 1980, a survey conducted by UNHCR of the refugee population then in the Sudan, estimated that most refugee families (between 50 and 75 per cent) were headed by women.

Although this demographic imbalance is somewhat redressed in long-term refugee situations, particularly as semi-permanent settlements are developed and men gradually rejoin their families, women refugees overall remain in the majority, and a large number of families are headed by widows, divorced or deserted wives. Particularly in the early years of a refugee situation, the majority of refugee households, whether rural or urban, are headed by women, and families depend on these women for their survival in their new situation. "In the last analysis, it is the women who ultimately solve the problems facing a family: food, clothing, health and education. Men have the tendency whatever the situation, whether they are at war or in situations of transition, to leave in search of employment, and hence this tradition does not allow them to confront the situation".[1]

Women-headed households have become the norm rather than the exception in refugee situations. Yet once basic needs such as food, shelter and health care are satisfactorily delivered and long-term assistance programmes are designed men refugees become the major target group. The refugee by definition, becomes "he" and projects which aim to provide training, employment and incomes are geared primarily to "him". Women are generally relegated to the status of a "special" minority group within these programmes or are included in projects geared to the old and the handicapped.

Policy formulation and programme design take little note of women refugees' vital role as the focal point of family survival. As the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) commented in 1984: "Concepts of vulnerability were found to be applied indiscriminately so that able-bodied women and widows were

lumped together with the aged, disabled and the handicapped, and their energies channelled into traditional, marginal and unproductive welfare activities.[2] Examples abound in the prevailing literature, most particularly that concerned with project formulation. For example, in one study of refugees in the Sudan it was stressed that "special attention should be given to vulnerable groups among the refugees, especially women, youth and the aged", and "in formulating the final project documents, attention will need to be focussed on special groups. The first of these is women. The prevalence of female-headed households in most settlements implies that any efforts at employment and income generation will require measures that are specifically directed to them".[3]

When "durable solutions" are sought, and programmes designed to develop productive activities which can bring refugees much-needed income and lessen their reliance on external aid, policies differ little from those which have shaped development plans in Africa for the past three decades. As in conventional programmes designed for settled communities, women are seen as a separate group which plays a secondary role within the productive organisation of the family and the community. If this approach bears little relation to reality in most African non-refugee contexts, it verges on the absurd when applied to refugees.

It is certainly true that women refugees face a host of problems, but these problems are those faced by the majority of adult refugees, not by a "special" group. Without their menfolk and placed in an entirely new environment after the trauma of flight and the crisis which precipitated it, women must provide for their families' daily needs. They must resolve the immediate problems of survival, of food and shelter. And when essential aid is provided, they must still continue to care for their children and other dependents, process rations, cook food, provide water and firewood for the family's use, and generally reorganise their daily working lives to adapt themselves to their new situation. They provide the essential labour, services and organisation which allow a refugee family to survive. "The pivotal role of women in the family is highlighted by the fact that if the refugee's father dies, the family stays together, but if the mother dies the family often disintegrates, with special problems of fostering out the children when there are no close relatives."[4] Women form the main productive group within a camp or settlement, and as such they should become a major target group for long-term assistance aimed towards the self-sufficiency of a refugee population.

Programme assistance: What has gone wrong?

UNHCR and other refugee-aid organisations have for some years now stressed the importance of a shift in programming assistance for refugees from purely humanitarian aid to efforts to assist refugee communities to achieve at least some degree of self-reliance. A key premise in the UNHCR Handbook on Emergencies is that "... the immediate response of the international community to a major influx of refugees must take into account the ultimate aims of promoting a durable solution to the problem. This requires that the response both encourages the self-sufficiency of the refugees and avoids prolonged dependency on outside relief." With the enormous growth of the refugee population in Africa over the past ten years, the search for "durable solutions" to assist refugees help themselves becomes increasingly urgent. Hundreds of thousands of refugees are massed in host countries which can ill afford to bear such a burden on their hard-pressed and fragile economies. Vast numbers are either crowded into enormous holding camps (sometimes for years on end) where they are totally dependent on aid for their survival or,

often unassisted, they swell the rapidly growing slums of cities where essential services and employment can only be provided for a fraction of the indigeneous population.

Past efforts to develop programmes which enable refugees to achieve some degree of independence have not met with a great deal of success. Whether in holding camps such as those in Somalia or Djibouti, or settlements such as those in Zaire or the Sudan which have made some provision for agricultural production, the majority of refugees have remained dependent on external aid for their day-to-day survival. As the ILO pointed out in 1980, "the structure of aid needed depends on the characteristics of the group of refugees and on the nature of the country of asylum. According to their age, sex, origins and skills, refugees will have different aid requirements."[5] Yet in many current refugee situations long-term aid is not structured primarily on the characteristics, skills or needs of most of the adult refugee population, but rather on pre-conceived notions of what aid is most suitable, and for whom.

As mentioned above, most refugee-assistance programmes aimed at solutions to the problems of dependency have been geared to men. This concentration of aid to men refugees is to some extent explicable, particularly in the initial stages of a refugee-assistance programme: it is easier and quicker to provide training, employment and self-employment opportunities to men rather than to women because men are more mobile, less socially restricted in the type of work they can undertake, and have more time at their disposal as they are neither engaged in productive work nor encumbered by daily household responsibilities. Unlike the majority of women, most men have some degree of basic education and are at least partially literate. Men's vocational skills are often more immediately relevant to their new situation in being geared to a cash economy (e.g. shoemaking, metalwork). The products women customarily make are usually destined for home use, and their skills are widely shared among women rather than confined to a specialty trade group.

However, to these practical reasons why assistance is primarily geared to men, others must be added: the bias of policy-makers and foreign-aid workers, who continue to consider the male-headed household as the norm even where female-headed households predominate; and the assumption that the man is invariably the primary producer for the family, the economic welfare of which consequently depends on his efforts. The failure to take into account the value of women's work outside the formal economy has been matched by the widespread underestimation and stereotyping of women's participation within the economy. These same failures are reproduced in refugee situations. The western male-headed household model has often been exported by non-governmental organisations for application in camps. Camp censuses, statistics, skills listing, training opportunities and selection procedures, tend to focus on men whose names are the only ones registered.[6]

Even agricultural schemes for refugees are usually geared towards men, although it is the women in most African countries who perform the majority of agricultural tasks and produce most of the food for home consumption. For example, in an article published in 1982, the following was suggested: " . . . there are cases, such as Somalia, where the great majority of the camps is composed of women and children. In such situations, agricultural production may not be the best choice for employment and income generation."[7] Yet it was precisely women refugees in Somalia who, during meetings with ILO consultants that same year, expressed a fervent wish to be given the opportunity to farm and also expressed surprise and disappointment that the farming projects being developed were reserved for men!

A new approach is needed by policy and decision-makers and by aid workers, to reach the majority of adult refugees and their families to develop productive activities which can, to some extent, replace the aid on which they are totally dependent. A more effective approach clearly entails, as a first step, identifying women refugees as the primary group for assistance; and then designing major training and employment-generation programmes based on women's existing or potentially productive abilities. Such an approach is imperative if more than a minority of refugees are to be assisted, and if the major objective of even partial self-sufficiency of a refugee community is to be achieved. This objective cannot be achieved if women's energies continue to be channelled into activities which are often more akin to occupational therapy than to gainful employment.

Redirecting assistance to women as the major target group is also vital because it addresses itself to the immediate and urgent need of women refugees to earn a regular cash income. Even in camps where food rations are satisfactorily delivered and other basic needs provided, women require income to provide themselves and their families with essentials not included in the "aid basket". Items such as vegetables (scurvy among children is not uncommon in refugee camps), matches, tea, firewood for cooking, and kerosene must be bought, as well as those items which are provided free irregularly: soap, shoes and clothing, etc. Women must often sell or barter a part of their rations to buy these necessities, and hence face, as a result, lean days before the next ration.

There are very few opportunities for wage employment for women in camps. Most women come from rural backgrounds and the overwhelming majority are illiterate and speak only their mother tongue. Thus opportunities for employment in low-level administrative work offered by camp authorities, or as field workers or interpreters offered by aid agencies, are generally open to men. Fewer women than men will have had enough education to qualify for training schemes aimed at providing the community with its own school teachers, community leaders and adult education workers. Nor do women have access to opportunities for unskilled wage labour. Men are hired as porters, store-keepers, watchmen or manual labourers for the construction of roads, buildings, wells, etc. Women generally only find employment as food-handlers at distribution points (generally part-time work) and in health-related programmes, where they are often engaged as unskilled workers in supplementary child-feeding centres and as community health workers for mother and child care. Women health workers are usually chosen because they already have some basic literacy skills, and are then given training in primary health care. Traditional birth attendants are sometimes given training to upgrade their skill and paid a regular stipend for their services.

Most women therefore, must either depend on their own entrepreneurial abilities to earn an income, or on the income-generating opportunities provided by projects developed by aid agencies. Where there is suitable, unused and unclaimed land nearby, some women refugees may on their own accord engage in small-scale agricultural production, but this opportunity depends largely on local conditions and is exceptional. Unassisted efforts aimed at non-agricultural self-employment are relatively scarce and generally confined to petty trading in basic commodities (a handful of tomatoes and onions, a few boxes of matches, a small tin or two of tomato purée sold by the spoonful); the selling of tea or snacks prepared at home and sold on the roadside or in markets; and the sale of handicrafts. These activities, which make up the bulk of women's entrepreneurial ventures, require very little capital and usually provide a minute income in which the women's labour time is barely if at all, costed. Only a handful of women will have individual access to enough

capital to run a shop or market stall with adequate stocks. Most of such businesses in refugee camps or settlements are run by men, refugee and non-refugee.

In the unfamiliar conditions and alien environment of holding or settlement camps where they are unable to practice their main productive activities linked to agriculture or animal husbandry, the majority of women depend on employment opportunities provided by aid agencies. Such projects when geared to women however, have been secondary to major development programmes. The range of these so-called "women's projects" is usually quite narrow, and includes:

(1) A major emphasis on the production of traditional handicrafts, where vocational skills and simple business training are seldom offered, and little effort is made to upgrade or diversify production techniques. The handicrafts produced also suffer from a limited and vulnerable market and provide very little income.

(2) "Modern" handicraft production for which training is provided to introduce what is often a new skill, followed by material assistance to set up production. Production is generally geared to a limited urban, non-refugee market and the potential for regular sales and reasonable levels of income vary greatly. Such "modern" handicraft production includes tie-dyed cloth, embroidery, crocheting, macrame, etc. - products for which there is very little real demand inside or outside the camps.

(3) Vegetable gardening (as opposed to mechanised or irrigated farming) which is often carried out in the woman's "backyard" and is geared for the family consumption rather than for the market. Such projects are often linked to cooking demonstrations and nutrition training, particularly if new types of vegetables are introduced.

(4) Farming opportunities are sometimes provided for groups of women, who either cultivate communally or on individual plots. In general, these "women's farms" are modest in size and are not mechanised, in contrast to the large-scale, and often irrigated agricultural schemes provided for male-headed refugee families. Training is often centred around a demonstration plot which seeks to introduce women to more nutritious vegetables for family use, rather than those geared primarily to market demand.

(5) Small-scale free-range poultry raising for individual women or small groups. The size of flocks vary from between ten to 30 birds. Minimal training in poultry keeping and some material assistance is provided. Much of the egg production is destined for home consumption, with only a small proportion sold to provide an almost negligible income.

(6) Tailoring is a popular activity among aid agencies. Training and material assistance is often given to women to establish themselves as tailors either individually or in groups. It is one of the few activities for which relatively substantial credit is readily available, to buy sewing machines and materials. Incomes vary considerably, depending on competition (particularly from male tailors, local or refugee, who established their business when the camps were first developed); the purchasing power of the local population; market demand and opportunities for large-scale

production provided by aid agencies (e.g. through the purchase of school uniforms for example). The quality of training varies, and most projects do not include the necessary business skills development women require. Often far more tailors are trained than the market can absorb.

(7) Material assistance has infrequently been given to women to prepare snack foods (fried dough cakes, local sweets) for sale near local tea stalls or in camp markets. This production brings characteristically low incomes. Groups of women have also been materially assisted and trained to run restaurants in the camps and settlements. While such an activity may have good potential for revenue, most project-assisted "women's restaurants" are set up long after private restaurants have been established on prime sites and captured the majority of the potential clientele. "Women's restaurants" therefore are forced into marginal areas and consequently find it difficult to compete.

(8) Soapmaking has been a most popular small-scale industry developed for women refugees. Sales and income potential can be substantial, as it provides an essential commodity for community and external markets. Incomes have been restricted however, for a variety of reasons: irregular access to and escalating cost of raw materials; lack of transportation facilities; competition from a variety of sources, not least of which is the occasional distribution of free imported soap by aid agencies; lack of sufficient starting capital; and poor technical and/or management training.

(9) Honey production has also been attempted in some cases, but marketing has been hampered by lack of packaging materials, transportation difficulties and unreliable outlets. There have been few systematic attempts to develop small-scale mechanised industries for women refugees. Some hand-operated grinding mills have been provided for women's groups, with the intention that these should generate income. These schemes have generally proven unpopular and the mills fallen into disuse, as the work is labour-intensive and brings very small returns.

(10) Loans are provided on an exceptional basis for individuals or small groups of women to establish themselves in business or to improve existing businesses. Credit is given together with simple business skills training and advice. Loans are often given to finance such businesses as food and beverage production or tailoring. Little or no assistance is given for the procurement of raw materials or the identification of sales outlets.

(11) Training programmes may be provided for skills development for income generation combined with several other components. These programmes tend to be social welfare-oriented and emphasise women's domestic roles. Subjects include hygiene, nutrition, child care and home economics, together with literacy and numeracy. Income-earning skills are often linked to activities which can serve to improve a woman's domestic capabilities regardless of whether they actually generate an income. These programmes often require attendance for some hours daily over a period of several months at a training centre, and tend to attract young unmarried girls who have received no formal education. They may, however, provide training and

employment for suitably educated women refugees who are selected as trainers for these programmes.

There are several factors which combine to explain the limited range of assistance provided to both rural and urban women refugees, and the failure of many training programmes and income-generating projects to reach them.

Time

Their heavy workload is perhaps women refugees single biggest constraint, yet it is precisely those women with large families and heavy household responsibilities who have the greatest need to earn an income. The image of the idle refugee sitting listlessly waiting for aid is a false one where women are concerned. Women refugees, most particularly those with families, are kept very busy indeed with household tasks: food processing and cooking, child care, house maintenance and cleaning, washing, fetching water and firewood (which in some areas of large refugee concentration where supplies are rapidly depleted, can take several hours to collect). In addition, hours are spent in distribution queues and particularly in the early months after arrival, in attendance at supplementary feeding centres. In many cases, the support of the extended family is lacking and the burden cannot be shared among adult female relatives. Men contribute very little labour, but children, particularly daughters, provide considerable assistance. On settlement schemes where agricultural land is provided, regular farm work adds to a woman's workload. Thus very little time is available for women to engage in most aid-assisted remunerative employment or training schemes, the hours of which are generally incompatible with those of a woman's normal working day.

Skills

Many of the skills which women bring with them are not immediately or directly relevant for employment or self-employment in their new environment. Most refugees in Africa come from rural backgrounds and are farmers and/or pastoralists: occupations on which they and their families can no longer depend. Their artisanal products are often geared to household use rather than for sale. Those women who once earned their living as artisans (potters, weavers, etc.) are usually cut off from sources of raw materials and are ignorant of local market demand, or their products differ from the local varieties in ways which make them unsaleable except among other refugees who, unfortunately, have little purchasing power. Women traders are similarly unfamiliar with the market opportunities in their new situation. And both groups lack the capital needed to start up new activities. To aggravate the situation, only a minority of women refugees (generally those from an urban or semi-urban background) have some education.

Yet many women bring with them skills which are potentially marketable, given suitable training, advice, and assistance, such as in food processing and preservation or house construction. Their swift adaptation to a new life-style testifies to their initiative, and those few who have been given access to capital have adequately demonstrated their entrepreneurial capacity. Nevertheless, the fact that they are cut off from familiar production methods and business networks has tended to leave women with few options than to rely on aid agencies for their income-earning opportunities.

Cultural constraints

The many restrictions on the kinds of work "appropriate" for women vary with the religious and cultural backgrounds of refugees. For some, these constraints prevent women from accepting work which takes them outside their homes, regardless of how urgent the financial need maybe. Most African women refugees, however, are not physically confined, but are restricted in the kinds of training and occupations which are seen as suitable or respectable. Therefore, employment opportunities for women refugees are almost invariably confined to: health and child care, handling of food, teaching, etc.

The very limitations of this range of activities influences the effectiveness of assistance aimed at helping women generate satisfactory incomes. However, it must be stressed that these social constraints are not only confined to the refugee community itself, but are reinforced and perpetuated by aid agencies, whose workers bring with them their own cultural biases and stereotyped views of women's work. Thus, even if an irrigated farming project is developed for women, a male pump operator will be employed, since this work would be regarded by both men refugees and aid workers alike as "too heavy" for women, which is ironic in view of the familiar sight of women carrying heavy loads of firewood or water.

However, refugees are thrown into totally new situations where many cultural norms are altered, at least temporarily. Many women, in sole charge of their families and households, make decisions regarding the disposal of income over which they would previously have had no control. Christensen considers that because of the importance of women's work in the daily rhythm of camp life in Somalia, "the women are gaining impact by developing positions of strength (while) ... the men's status is weakened because they can no longer support the family or take decisions".[8] Women are often pushed by the need for income to consider new ways of earning cash. Those who have never farmed before are eager to join agricultural projects; those who have never raised poultry are keeping chickens; and illiterate women are handling chemicals such as caustic soda and silicate for soap production.

Therefore "there is a need to recognise that refugee and displaced women are people who have been uprooted from their traditional past. They are constantly faced with change and easily adapt to it. In the new environment, the majority are forced to take on non-traditional roles, as heads of households. These women can therefore effectively perform a wide range of tasks and their employment possibilities should only be limited by market structure and not by gender".[9]

Lack of information

One of the Resolutions on the special needs of displaced and women refugees adopted by the World Conference of the UN Decade for Women at Copenhagen in 1980 urged UNHCR to carry out detailed studies and research, especially directed to the initial needs of displaced and women refugees. Yet there is generally a great lack of knowledge about women refugees populations, whether in camps or urban areas, which severely hampers effective training and assistance for income generation.

Information is more readily available where there are small numbers of refugees, most particularly if they have had some education, are registered with UNHCR, and receive direct financial assistance. But where there are vast

numbers sheltered in camps, or spontaneously settled in urban areas, the information gathered generally relates only to men refugees. For example, in one socio-economic survey of refugees in Somalia published in 1982, women's previous work was described as "home economics" with no further data given on the nature of their previous occupations or their skills. Numbers of adults classified as pastoralist, settled farmers or urban dwellers were not disaggregated by sex. Generally speaking, the only gender-specific information given prominence was the number of female-headed households, which was then labelled as a "special group". The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), has criticised the lumping together of able-bodied women with the aged and the handicapped while other critics have described how only men refugees are included in camp statistics and skill surveys. "Until an alert woman economist visited a camp of Angolans in Zaire, the Belgian camp administrators had not in three years thought to register women, or to encourage them to organise among themselves; there was malnutrition among them, and neglected skills as well ..."[10]

Lack of participation in decision-making

Even though they have a vital interest in the organisation and distribution of supplies, resources and services, women refugees are rarely involved in decision-making in the camps. Camp officials at all levels, whether refugees or host country nationals, are invariably male and it is they who are responsible for every aspect of the camp's administration and development, and who therefore control the allocation of resources, including employment opportunities, provided by aid agencies.

Particularly in camps with large refugee populations, foreign aid agencies must rely on the more informed knowledge of these officials to identify those refugees most in need of assistance and the type of assistance most relevant. It is not surprising, therefore, that women's needs are often overlooked or misunderstood, and aid misdirected.

Even where women's organisations have been formed in camps, they tend to rely on the patronage of male officials and their representatives are primarily involved in decisions on matters which are seen as "women's concerns", such as infant immunisation campaigns or the "mobilisation" of women to join literacy classes. These women's organisations, however, offer foreign-aid workers useful and direct links to women refugees and can provide much more specific and accurate information on their needs and skills.

Loans

Loan schemes for refugees in camps are increasingly encouraged as a means of replacing highly subsidised projects with little refugee contribution. Criteria are generally less stringent as regards the long-term full financial viability of self-employment schemes. Where special credit programmes for refugees are established however, women tend to have less access to loans, even though no collateral or guarantor is necessary. They are seldom considered a target group for such schemes since men are seen as heads of families, and because they are able to engage in the more potentially profitable types of work which are usually closed to women, e.g. loans to purchase donkeys and carts to sell water from door to door. Where credit programmes for urban refugees have been developed, the loans offered are often based on criteria which may exclude women from the start: basic education and

previous business and/or employment experience. Businesses for which loans are generally given are small production enterprises which may also provide employment for other refugees. Thus businesses on the scale or of the type usually undertaken by women are not often perceived as economically viable and worth supporting. This is especially true if national formal credit institutions are represented on specially constituted loan committees. Many agencies, in their attempts to overcome the negative experiences of some loan programmes for refugees (in which women were seldom included) have started to place considerable emphasis on "entrepreneurial qualities", which they then define. Profiles of the "ideal" entrepreneur preclude women by virtue of the characteristics they select.

There are, therefore, few instances of women receiving loans through urban-based business development schemes. However, it is important to note that many of these loan programmes now tend to include, as an adjunct, "income-generating" projects for women, which neither attempt to apply business-like criteria nor aim to provide anything but a supplementary income in order to reduce women refugees dependence on aid!

Counselling and extension services

Experience shows that women refugees in urban areas find it difficult to make use of the personal or career counselling services provided by aid agencies for a variety of reasons. Women with children for whom they are solely responsible cannot leave them unattended for hours at a stretch while they travel by bus or foot to counselling offices located in town centres. Nor can they easily find the time. In some cases, it is considered improper for a woman to visit a public place unattended by a male relative. In other instances, women do not speak the official language and must provide their own (often hired) interpreter. In the Sudan, in 1982, women comprised 15 per cent of the refugees who requested counselling on employment, and only 10 per cent of those who sought medical counselling.

Camps and settlements are generally very poorly served by female extension workers. Schemes to train community development or extension workers from within the refugee population concentrate overwhelmingly on young men. As a result, community self-help efforts are therefore guided by men and not geared to the needs of the majority of women refugees. Aid agencies depend on the skills of the leaders of women's organisations (where these organisations exist) to provide, voluntarily, what amounts to extension services for projects, but these women are seldom given the opportunity to upgrade or increase their skills. In camps or settlements where there are no women's organisations, the majority of women refugees and their families have little or no direct access to officials or aid agencies, and hence limited means of making their needs known.

II. SELECTED EXPERIENCES

While UN specialised agencies have implemented development projects for refugees, particularly over the past five years, the great majority of projects intended for long-term assistance are designed and implemented by international non-governmental organisations, often partially or entirely funded by UNHCR. At the outset of a large refugee influx, UNHCR and host governments usually depend to a great extent on NGOs to establish basic health services, housing, water supplies, etc. Scores of private aid agencies

respond to these emergency situations and together provide the practical assistance needed.

Once essential services are satisfactorily delivered, it is often these same NGOs which seek to widen the scope of their work to answer longer-term refugee needs. Social or community development workers or other technical expertise will be recruited to complement the work of an expatriate relief team whose presence gradually becomes unnecessary. Hence once the emergency needs are well attended, there will often be a change in the types of NGOs providing assistance, and those geared to emergency and relief will be replaced by those which concentrate on development projects.

NGOs work quite independently, albeit within the guide-lines formulated by both the host government and UNHCR. Particularly in the early years of a major refugee influx, the host government may function as a co-ordinating body through a specially created institution (e.g. the National Refugee Commission in Somalia), but it generally has limited capacity to implement assistance projects at the camp level. In many countries, the UNHCR Branch Office is often the main source of financing for project implementation. It also provides infrastructural support to NGOs (e.g. transport, radio communications) and the legal framework within which the agencies can operate in the host country (e.g. protection of aid workers, specific individual and agency privileges).

Thus the scores of agencies working within a large refugee assistance programme (in Somalia there were over 30 in 1983) are loosely bound to national or other institutions. These NGOs, which may originate from several different countries and employ staff of various nationalities, bring with them their own development philosophies. Within very broad limits, they are free to design and develop projects which conform to their own, often disparate, approaches, aims, work methods and expertise. The size and capacities of the NGOs, their funding sources, range of experience, competence, and the emphasis they place on different areas of work can vary enormously.

Most non-farm projects developed by NGOs are small-scale, and with large refugee populations to cover in many scattered camps, a host of small income-generating projects burgeon, implemented by a score or more NGOs and dependent in the main on short-term funding. Experience has shown that there is little effective co-ordination between agencies, considerable replication of efforts, and relatively little sharing of information and experience. As a result, there is little coherence or systematic planning of vocational training programmes.

Where large-scale training programmes exist they are generally geared to the provision of health facilities, primary schools, or other basic needs rather than income-generation. Only exceptionally has a national institution with a well-developed outreach structure been able to widen its scope to include a large refugee population and thereby provide a consistent approach to vocational training in camps or settlements. National vocational training institutions at every level are seldom able to find the means to meet the needs of refugees.

The following review attempts to provide what are considered representative examples of training schemes specifically geared to women's gainful employment, and the types of assistance most commonly given to women within projects in which they are not the major target group. The review

includes projects for urban and rural refugees, and describes one or two projects which are still only proposed for implementation.

Somalia

With an estimated total of 700,000 refugees, Somalia hosts the second largest refugee population in Africa. A little less than half a million refugees are sheltered in a total of 37 camps, most of which have been in existence for six years or more. In 1981, it was estimated that two-thirds of refugee households in the camps were headed by women, and although there has been a visible increase in the numbers of men in the camps in recent years, women still form the majority of adults. All refugees in camps receive food rations and other basic necessities on which they are totally dependent for their survival. The refugees are ethnically related to their host population and most speak the same language. As a result, national institutions have been able to include refugee training in their scope of work from the start.

Many of the camps are situated in arid or semi-arid areas. Some irrigated farms have been developed, but as the camps are presently situated, there is no potential for agricultural development to a level which could provide a subsistence base for even a minority of the refugee population. Only non-farm income-earning activities, therefore, could provide the majority of refugee families with a means of livelihood to replace, even partially, the provision of aid. Attempts to introduce such activities, however, have met with little success.

Three large-scale training programmes are worth noting however. Under the guidance of the Refugee Health Unit (attached to the Ministry of Health) expatriate medical teams in each camp trained selected men and women refugees as primary health care workers. By 1984, almost all medical teams had successfully handed over their work to local and refugee staff. The specially created Institute for In-service Teachers Training (within the Ministry of Education) undertook the training in the camps of 1,500 refugees as primary school teachers and approximately 25 per cent of trainees were women.

The family life programme

A large-scale training programme for women refugees was begun in 1984, with substantial financial assistance from UNHCR, UNICEF, and other international agencies, by the Women's Education Department (WED) of the Ministry of Education which had over some years before operated a "Family Life Programme" to provide non-formal education to rural and urban women throughout Somalia.

The Family Life Programme has established centres in 34 camps along similar lines as their national centres. Training concentrates on home-making and child care skills; literacy and numeracy; and income-generating skills consisting mainly of handicraft and tailoring. Training in the national Family Life Programme covers a five-year period and provides graduates with a recognised certificate which qualifies them for further training or employment by the Ministry of Education. Training in the refugee centres however, covers only a 12-month period, divided into three separate courses of four months each, and students may choose how many courses they wish to follow. Although students receive a certificate on successful completion of the course, it is not recognised nationally and does not qualify them for further training or employment.

In the first four months of training the curriculum concentrates on literacy, numeracy, home and child care, nutrition, cooking and "basic general knowledge". Some training in simple hand-sewing and fibre handicrafts is given. The curriculum in the following four months differs only in the greater emphasis put on sewing and handicraft skills. The final course concentrates on income-generating skills of which tailoring/dressmaking and handicraft production are the main activities. In a few camps vegetable farming, embroidery, and machine knitting of tee-shirts are included. Graduates can continue to use the centres and the equipment, but they must bring their own materials. They receive no financial support, but are given technical assistance in their production.

Thousands of women are enrolled in the refugee camp centres each year: from the first year's intake of 3,750 students (1980-81) figures have climbed to 8,000-10,000 annually. Officials give the drop-out rate at a low 30 per cent, and a total of 38,750 women refugees had enrolled in 1985, of whom 27,000 are recorded as having successfully completed the full 12-month course. Courses are generally held for some hours daily, either in the mornings or afternoons. All centres have a day-care centre for approximately 40 children under school age which are open to all who wish to enrol their children. The restricted size is because the large majority of students are unmarried girls, without children.

Most of the teachers in the centres are also refugees. In 1981, Camp Commanders were requested to select ten literate women from each of the 35 camps to undergo three months training at the WED training centre in Mogadishu. This was followed by six months in-service training in the camps under the supervision of WED field staff. A total of 250 women (out of an initial intake of 350) completed training.

The centres produce uniforms for the camps' school children which are bought by UNHCR and provide a source of income for trainees and graduates. A pilot "Income-Generating Centre", recently opened in one camp, attached to the FLP Centre, is designed to accommodate former trainees who wish to continue production on their own. It has 30 sewing machines and a shop. A restaurant attached to this Centre was also opened. In spite of initial disapproval from the community (men) which regarded it as improper for women to serve food in a public place, and wanted men to be employed, WED insisted the project was intended solely to provide women with employment. The Camp Commander gave his support and argued at a mass meeting that there would be no problems "if the men who use the restaurant respect the women workers". The restaurant is now an accepted and successful camp institution.

WED officials find it difficult to estimate the levels of incomes earned by graduates in any of the camps and can give no reliable figures. They stress that the activities in which the women are trained are not intended to provide a living wage, only "additional help". Because mainly young girls are enrolled in the FLP courses, the Ministry plans a survey among women in the camps in 1986 to discover what type of practical assistance they really want. WED staff feel most women refugees have no interest in theoretical, or even literacy, training.

NGOs which have included FLP graduates in their own income-generating projects report that graduates' technical and literacy skills are not adequate and must be upgraded if they are to lead to further training and successful self-employment.

An ILO project

From 1981 to 1984 the ILO developed income-earning activities for women refugees in several camps in Somalia. The aims of the project were to provide women with a source of income, particularly through the production of items needed in the camps; to provide women with marketable skills; and to strengthen the women refugees' organisations, which had been formed by the refugees themselves in all camps soon after arrival. Project activities in the first year of emergency relief sought to provide assistance, swiftly and simply, to as many women as possible, based on a widespread existing skill: the making of palm leaf sleeping mats used by every household. UNHCR was providing sleeping mats free to refugees and undertook to buy those made by women refugees. Individual earnings were small, estimated at $12 a month. A total of 600 women from nine camps were registered as producers, but it is probable that far more were involved, with women taking turns when they needed a little income and making way for relatives or friends who continued in their name. Taken over the 15 months of production, individual incomes were therefore probably considerably less.

The project's assistance did not go beyond the provision of raw materials and a regular market. No training was offered. Project staff worked closely with the leaders of the women's organisations, who were responsible for the selection of participants and occasionally the distribution of mats. This initial partnership with the women's leaders created valuable links for the project's second phase, the more long-term oriented Integrated Refugee Camp Deveopment Project (IRCDP) which was implemented over two years (1983-84).

The IRCDP developed five activities for women: poultry-raising, irrigated vegetable farming, chilli powder and laundry soap production, and handicraft production and marketing. During meetings with project staff, the women refugees themselves requested assistance in vegetable farming and handicraft marketing, but made no other suggestions for activities which they might undertake. The activities were selected by staff with the assistance of a marketing consultant, who judged each activity as potentially economically viable and capable of providing a regular source of income.

Of these five activities, as they were designed and implemented, only two provided the participants with relatively substantial earnings: vegetable farming and soap production. Irrigated farming, through which 87 women had individual plots for growing onions, tomatoes, chilli peppers and watermelons, proved to be the most lucrative activity. Produce was readily marketable locally with no assistance required from project staff. In later seasons, the women on their own initiative reduced vegetable production and added maize, which sold profitably as animal fodder (maize for home consumption was received in rations). Practical problems centred mainly around intermittent and uncertain fuel supplies for the irrigation pumps. Average earnings for 1984 were estimated at around $350 per farmer.

Chilli powder production proved unsuccessful as a viable small-scale industry. Supplies of fresh chillies depended on produce from IRCDP farmers who raised prices when they realised their monopoly. Normal weight loss during drying greatly increased the cost of the finished product, which could not compete on the local market with commercial powder which was adulterated and therefore cheaper. This activity was terminated by project staff; but some of the original producers subsequently resumed production unassisted with apparently successful sales through a new shop organised by women.

The IRCDP's domestic poultry-raising scheme proved to be on too small a scale to generate income. Of the 80 women given ten birds each, only three were subsequently able to build up flocks large enough to provide a regular income from egg sales. Assistance in handicraft production and marketing was supported somewhat hesitantly by project staff, who were aware of the shortcomings of such assistance. Local markets were saturated with similar items made by nationals and sales depended entirely on expatriates. Average individual incomes were very small, around $30 per year. This activity nevertheless continued throughout the life of the IRCDP and with subsequent marketing assistance from the local NGO which took over the ILO's work in 1985. It proved popular with elderly women for whom it was a familiar activity. As many women as wished could participate and numbers fluctuated every month. Small loans were offered to purchase raw materials, but most women were uneasy debtors and wished to repay the entire loan as soon as an item was sold.

Laundry soap production provided women participants with fluctuating, but relatively satisfactory earnings (approximately $350 per producer in 1984). Monthly incomes were influenced by market demand and irregular supplies of locally procured raw materials. Good market outlets were gradually established, in the camp and local markets, and through wholesalers and government institutions in the capital. Local sales dropped dramatically whenever UNHCR distributed imported soap free to refugees. Raw materials, initially abundant, became increasingly scarce and procurement still depends on project support.

Participants for each activity were selected by the camp's women's organisation, on the basis of criteria established by the IRCDP: that the women should be among the poorest in the camp, and preferably heads of households. In the case of the farmers, participants were required to have enough family members to cultivate the plots. Lack of time did not prove an inhibiting factor and very few participants dropped out. Farmers generally worked on their plots in the afternoon, and were able to bring their young children with them if necessary. The soap producers were middle-aged women (average ages 35-50), a fact which may explain why they were able to work away from home for some hours each morning. All women selected were illiterate.

Technical skills training for most of these activities were adequately planned for and successfully imparted. Initial training in soap-making was provided by two technical specialists. This six-week training was further consolidated by the IRCDP's Technical Supervisor (an industrial chemist and Somali national) over a period of 12 months. At the time of the withdrawal of the ILO, producers required no further technical assistance, were able to maintain a good quality soap in spite of great variations in the quality of raw materials, and had themselves trained refugees from another camp in soap-making techniques. The project's agriculturalist (a refugee) provided on-the-job training in irrigation techniques and vegetable growing (new skills even for women who had farmed before) and general advice on improved farming methods. After training, farmers only required some technical follow-up on the maintenance of canals and seed selection. The women employ a men refugee as pump operator.

Little technical skills training was provided for poultry raising or handicraft production, although the income-earning potential from both activities would undoubtedly have increased as a result. Project staff did not have the necessary skills, and no funds were available to recruit even

short-term specialists. The limited skills training provided was ad hoc, based on the availability and willingness of experts employed by other agencies.

The major shortcoming of the IRCDP was the lack of training in simple management skills and the organisation of production and marketing. This was due in part to the initial funding situation (12 months) which forced project staff to concentrate on the practical problems of implementation and emphasise technical skills training. A small business expert was recruited in the first year of implementation, to train local project staff, however, the training was of too short duration and at an unsuitable level for the staff. When a further 12-month implementation period was finally approved, training and project organisation patterns were already set, and new types of training were of little interest to the participants, who viewed management skills as too "theoretical". Nor was literacy training included in the project design, as in 1982 a major adult literacy programme to cover all camps was being planned by UNHCR and the government. This programme did not materialise unfortunately, and literacy teaching was therefore attempted by under-qualified project staff to fill the gap. It was expected that as production and marketing became established, an interest would develop among the women, particularly those who emerged as group leaders, to acquire simple management skills, and that the need for functional literacy would be perceived and readily accepted. However, the women only assumed a modicum of interest in matters which affected them directly: attendance rules and working hours, for example, and expressed no wish to assume any management responsibilities.

Four major factors therefore impeded management skills training:

(a) The initial project period was too short for the implementation of a programme covering both technical and simple business skills. In addition, those who designed the project did not perceive the immediate relevance.

(b) Project staff were neither properly trained nor qualified to develop a programme of simple business management skills.

(c) The participants were all illiterate, and to acquire management skills, it was felt they first needed some degree of literacy which they had no interest in acquiring even though it related to their productive work.

(d) Most importantly, there was a conflict in the ultimate objectives of the IRCDP staff and the refugees: the IRCDP aimed to hand over the production unit to the women refugees as a self-sustaining small-scale industry controlled and owned by them, and so reduce their total dependence on external aid. It was clear however, that the women's main objective was to earn an income in addition to the aid they received, not to replace it. They had no long-term commitment to the production unit, which would obviously exist for only as long as they remained in the camp.

The Action Aid Project

The British-based NGO, Action Aid, implemented one of the major training and credit assistance projects for women in Somalia. Action Aid provided

intensive training in high-grade tailoring and business management to a total of 50 women in eight camps. A sewing machine was supplied on credit to each trainee at the end of the course, to be paid back over a period of not longer than two years.

The project aimed to give further and substantial assistance to selected graduates of the Family Life Programme: to upgrade their tailoring skills to allow for diversification of production into more marketable products and provide simple management skills needed to run their own businesses. Six graduates from the FLP centres were selected in each camp. Criteria for selection stipulated that women should: come from among the less advantaged groups of refugees; have some manual ability (judged from work already produced); have reasonable levels of literacy and numeracy; and clearly want to develop their own businesses. Interviews were conducted by local staff to assess the women's economic needs and background, and their interest in the scheme. To assess literacy and numeracy skills, simple arithmetic and written tests were given. All but one of the trainees selected were young unmarried girls.

Training and assistance were given in three phases over a period of approximately 18 months. Women trainees were at the outset asked to participate in the design of the syllabus and the planning of the training course. At first they listed the items they wished to learn to make; however, gradually they realised they were required to take a longer view of their work organisation, and whether they intended to set themselves up as independent tailors or to work within a group production unit. This input helped shape the second phase of training, which included management skills.

The first nine months concentrated on technical skills, provided by a local "master tailor". All women were required to attend several hours of training every morning, six days a week. Skills training was generally of a high professional standard and included the making of men's trousers and shirts as well as women and children's clothes. Trainees were also taught to clean and maintain sewing machines.

The second phase of training again required that the women should attend the workshop daily. During these six months they began to make clothes for sale under supervision and received management training, including ways in which to pool resources for joint orders of supplies and other aspects of the organisation of group work, book-keeping and cost accounting. Most of the women's literacy skills were inadequate and required upgrading.

In the final phase of the programme, women chose whether they wished to use the workshops as production centres or set up their businesses elsewhere, as a group, or individually. Approximately half the women chose to form production groups using the centres. Each woman, whether part of a group or not, was then provided with a sewing machine, with mutually agreed repayment schedules. Because the women were not able to travel to urban centres on their own, they identified a "supplier" in each camp - a man willing to buy supplies on their behalf. There was little defaulting in loan repayments. Some women repaid their loans in a far shorter time than agreed, but this was not necessarily found to be an indication of a successful business venture: women had borrowed money from their relatives to repay Action Aid, and subsequently often found it difficult to meet this family debt. Because Action Aid considered that the cost of training and assistance for each woman represented a major investment (approximately $900) which could not be wasted,

each loan contract stipulated that the woman must use her sewing machine for business purposes. Thus, even if a woman had repaid the entire cost of the machine but was not working as a tailor, the machine was repossessed and the woman's money refunded. This occurred in six cases.

Action Aid has found it difficult to assess the levels of incomes earned by individuals or groups. The staff feel, however, that these are probably less than first estimated, for several reasons:

(a) The project was designed on the basis of the market potential in one camp, which at the time had few tailors and a clear demand for more. This was not representative of the majority of the camps where the project was subsequently implemented. In only two camps have the women captured an adequate portion of the market.

(b) Men prefer to go to male tailors since the making of shirts and trousers obviously involves measuring and bodily contact with clients.

(c) There is limited demand for high-level skills. Refugees' clothes are very simple to make, hence incomes derived are low. There is also little demand for children's clothes as these are distributed free by UNHCR. Most of the work available to women tailors, therefore, is mending, which brings very little income.

Action Aid also attempted, in 1982, to train young women refugees as sewing machine mechanics, in the belief that this skill would provide them with substantial employment opportunities in the camps. Eight young women graduates from the FLP were given intensive training by a local sewing machine mechanic for four months. This technical training was not judged to be very successful however, as it provided no diagnostic skills and only taught cleaning and greasing of machines. There were very few calls on the women's services, and Action Aid staff lost contact with the women shortly after their training was completed.

These three programmes implemented by the Women's Education Department, the ILO, and Action Aid, constitute the major programmes designed specifically to assist women refugees in Somalia. Several other agencies have implemented "women's projects" of the type described at the outset of the paper, but these have been adjuncts to major programmes which aimed primarily at men refugees, and hence the numbers of women assisted have been small. For example, a major poultry-raising scheme has been designed to provide only male heads of households with training in poultry-keeping although it is their wives who will be responsible for the care of the chicks which each of the 100 families in every camp will receive. Men trainees themselves have pointed out the problems which result if "families" are identified solely through one male household head for such schemes: those men with more than one wife wish to distribute the chicks they receive equally among their wives to avoid jealousy, but this is contrary to the project's design and the poultry expert insists that all chicks must be kept together in one compound. One does not need much imagination to envisage overall project effectiveness!

The Sudan

The Sudan hosts the largest refugee population in Africa, as a result of major influxes from several neighbouring countries over a period of more than 20 years. By January 1986, there were an estimated 1,164,000 refugees, of

which approximately half received assistance from UNHCR. The majority of refugees are from Ethiopia and Eritrea, whose numbers have tripled since 1984. Prior to 1984, 24 settlements were established for Ethiopian refugees, based either on potential agricultural production or located where there was a demand for labour ("wage-earning settlements"). These camps were judged by UNHCR to be at least partially self-sufficient however, since the drought of 1984, when all have required full food assistance. Agriculture has failed to provide an adequate means of livelihood and other assistance to refugees, both men and women, in income-earning activities have not met with significant success in raising incomes. Assistance to women has in the main been similar to that provided in Somalia, with a major emphasis on handicrafts, sewing and embroidery, all of which generate negligible incomes. In 1981, an ILO/UNHCR inter-disciplinary team found that many of the income-generating projects for men and women refugees "continue to require heavy levels of effective subsidy. At the same time, there is evidence of projects being set in motion without adequate evaluation of product demand, skills resources and management expertise".[11]

The ILO/UNHCR programme for income-generating activities

A major programme was designed in 1981 to assist refugees in the Sudan through farm and non-farm income-generating projects, by a joint, inter-disciplinary ILO/UNHCR team, based on the findings of manpower and socio-economic surveys and studies of existing self-help in rural and urban refugee communities. Training and assistance to women refugees, particularly household heads (a group identified as needing special assistance) are emphasised in the comprehensive publication detailing the programme's planned activities and implementation, and a variety of income-generating activities designed specifically for single women with children are proposed. The programme plans that there should be, at the settlement (or town) level, income-generating activities organised through two main units: Income-Generating Associations (IGA), separated into agricultural and non-agricultural types of activities (the sex of participants is not specified); and Women's Production Groups (WPG) "encompassing all the activities proposed for female-headed households".[12] Each IGA and WPG unit would be affiliated to a multi-purpose Federation of Income-Generating Association in five areas of refugee concentration in Eastern and Central Sudan.

The specific activities listed for women in rural refugee settlements are backyard vegetable gardening; fodder-production; bee-keeping; free-range poultry-raising; soap-making; and spinning. The two types of projects which aim to assist urban women refugees with families are:

(a) Textile production, in workshops to produce children's and women's clothes, hand-printed cloth, machine-knitted sweaters and socks, machine-embroidered sheets and table cloths, and some traditional handicrafts. Workshops will have their own shops as sales outlets, and will train women in technical skills, basic management and book-keeping. At the end of the project (implementation period, 12 months) a management committee of elected producers will take responsibility for the production and management of each workshop.

(b) The establishment of secretarial pools to provide typing, duplicating and photocopy services, initially in Khartoum, Kassala

and the Port Sudan. This scheme aims primarily to upgrade the skills of women who already have some secretarial experience to respond to the demand for high quality services. At the end of the project implementation (two years) committees formed by the women themselves will be responsible for the running of the secretarial pools.

Soap-making has also been undertaken in ten refugee settlements as a part of the programme implemented by a local aid agency to provide an income for women household heads. The original design, which was to provide employment for six women in each workshop, was altered to include two men and only four women in each case, in order to ensure that each unit had some literate members who were also able to travel to undertake procurement and sales, and to perform the heaviest part of the labour. Officials identified several problems during project implementation: difficulties in procurement of raw materials and poor technical training, resulting in low quality soap which is difficult to sell. Incomes have been lower than expected: $18 per month, which is the same amount refugees received as stipends during their training period. As a result, numbers of trainees in each workshop have been reduced to four to increase individual incomes; and the project has been limited to ten settlements so as to use existing funds to improve inputs and quality, until good markets and satisfactory incomes are established.

The organisation which has undertaken the training of improved secretarial skills as the first step to the establishment of secretarial pools has reported disappointing responses from women refugees, and particularly from heads of households. As a result, more than half the trainees are young, suitably qualified men, whom staff describe as "more motivated" and whose ultimate aim is to find employment in the Gulf States.

The Port Sudan small-scale enterprise development programme

The Port Sudan's population over the past 30 years has increased from 50,000 to an estimated 450,000. At least 50,000 refugees had settled spontaneously in the burgeoning slum areas before the last major influx in 1984-85, when the population was swelled by both refugees and the Sudanese displaced by the drought. The Sudanese population in the Port is a mixture of different ethnic groups and religions, and the refugee population is similarly heterogeneous.

Since 1982, Euro-Action ACORD (EAA), a consortium of European NGOs, has implemented a project designed to assist small-scale entrepreneurs in Port Sudan, through the provision of loans, business training and advice. The agency has a policy of positive discrimination towards women, particularly heads of households, and hence "actively reaches out" to assist women refugees.

The small-scale enterprise programme gives assistance by providing:

(a) Tools and/or equipment on a hire purchase basis. Credit ranges from between $20 to $2,000, with a maximum repayment period of 20 months.
(b) Loans for working capital, ranging from $60 to $200 at a time, with a maximum repayment period of two months.
(c) Short-term loans, preferably to groups, for a maximum of $15, which must be repaid in one month. These loans are primarily to buy basic raw material in bulk.

In addition, the programme provides workshops and market facilities for a small monthly rental. In the case of communal shelters for women vendors, rental is paid on a daily basis. There is a management consultancy service which, for a small fee based on the net income of the business, gives basic training in business management and monitors the progress of the enterprise for the period of the loan repayment.

Criteria for assistance are:

- qualifying applicants must be responsible for a household or be its major breadwinner;
- the total income of the family must not exceed $25 per head per month;
- applicants must have lived in Port Sudan for at least two years; and
- applicants accept the conditions and fees set by EAA and provide the necessary information truthfully.

Since the first loan was provided in June 1984 "by mere chance to a woman refugee with the sole responsibility for four children", approximately 1,000 clients have received assistance, of whom 40 per cent at any one time are women. Staff estimate that as a result of the assistance, incomes increased by an average of 100 per cent. Thus a woman refugee who sells cooked food from a small kiosk at a transport truck terminal, who was assisted by EAA with a total loan of $120 (for the purchase of basic equipment and a 75 kg bag of flour) was able to make a net income of $86 per month, during the period of loan repayment, for a working day of approximately eight hours, six days a week. She had no exact knowledge of her previous income, but staff estimate it to have been between $40-$50 per month.

Of the 35 different types of businesses assisted, those run by women fall within a very limited category, with catering as the major activity: restaurants, kiosks, cooked food and tea sold by the roadside, making of kisra or enjira (pancakes eaten as bread). Tailoring, usually home-based, is the second major activity. A few women have received loans to buy materials for bridal decorations (a paid service generally provided by a woman who specialises in this art) and to make and sell local perfumes.

Most of the loans to women are to provide them with basic equipment or to enable them to buy materials in bulk more cheaply (e.g. sugar or flour). The overwhelming majority of short-term loans are given to women (who are not inclined to favour group loans or group work). Very few women apply for the more substantial types of credit. The largest loans to women are generally given for the hire-purchase of sewing machines. As in Somalia's Action Aid project, women tailors often subsequently borrow from relatives to repay these loans, sometimes more quickly than scheduled. EAA staff judge women's tailoring businesses as among the least profitable, particularly if the woman works from her home and relies on neighbours as her customers.

The programme operates from five sub-offices located in slum areas. Each has at least two women and two men staff members, who come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, and between them speak all the major languages of the slum population. Several are refugees, and one sub-office is headed by a woman refugee from Eritrea who is herself solely responsible for her large family's upkeep. Educational backgrounds vary from secondary school leavers to university graduates. Most of the current staff members were given intensive training for several months in small business management in Port Sudan, by a foreign advisor, and were involved in the painstaking gathering of

socio-economic data before programme implementation. Staff recruited subsequently received on-the-job training provided by longer-serving staff members.

Staff provide regular advice, training and assistance to clients and identify new beneficiaries. Far more men than women come on their own accord to the sub-office and potential women clients must often be sought out. Staff frequently make unsolicited visits to women whom they have heard may welcome assistance. A sexual division of staff and clients generally prevails, although this is not encouraged. Women clients tend to communicate better with women staff, however most women staff have some male clients.

Almost all women clients are illiterate and EAA staff first teach them to develop a proper monthly accounting system. It is generally only when they first receive a loan that women are taught to cost their labour time and include a monthly salary in their expense costing, a concept which is sometimes quite strongly resisted, and not easily understood. Regular monthly home visits by staff during the time of the loan repayment are in effect training sessions, as staff assist their clients with the calculations of expenditure, income and profit, and help adjust prices if there has been marked inflation in the cost of a raw material. Some general marketing advice may also be given: a suggestion to change a vending site, if competition is proving too intense, or a change in daily vending hours to reach a larger clientele. The EAA programme has generally proven successful in assisting women to improve the profitability of their work by providing both credit and business training that is suited and appropriate to their needs and educational levels. The record of repayment of loans by women is excellent, far better than that of male clients.

EAA is concerned, however, that the numbers of women have dropped over the past 18 months, from 50 per cent in mid-1984 to 40 per cent, and that the loans to women are almost always small and for a limited range of activities which provide relatively low incomes. In their desire to discriminate positively for women, EAA refuses loans to men's catering businesses; and to stimulate effective outreach work to women, recent directives to sub-office staff have stipulated that women must constitute at least 50 per cent of clients. Yet the nature of assistance, as it is now designed, hampers diversification of help to women. Although not stipulated in the criteria, assistance is in practice given only to applicants (men or women) who are already engaged in a business or who have become familiar with its operation as an employee. This ensures that clients are already familiar with lines of supply and demand and will require little or no assistance in these crucial areas where staff have relatively little competence. It also ensures that women will remain within the range of activities they have always undertaken. Thus, when a woman refugee newly trained in carpentry (by a voluntary agency in a settlement area) requested assistance to launch her own workshop, she was refused a loan by EAA and advised to find work with a carpenter first, to gain experience. Sadly no efforts were made to place her with a carpenter client, who might have been persuaded to employ her.

Male and female EAA staff tend to attribute the difficulties of providing assistance to women to different causes. Male staff believe that even female household heads who depend on the income do not give their businesses enough priority, while men "always put their business first". Thus, if there is an immediate need in the family, women will use some of their business capital (e.g. flour, to feed their children); or if a family or community problem arises (e.g. a sick child, or a funeral) they will temporarily close their

businesses and so lose clientele as well as income. Women's businesses, therefore, remain small and continue to provide low incomes, particularly once loans are repaid but no equivalent capital set aside. Male staff see the difficulties primarily as stemming from "a lack of proper business sense", which must be instilled in women entrepreneurs if they are to succeed. They also consider that because the business a woman is engaged in is frequently related to home activities and partly operated in the home (e.g. food preparation for sale), it is therefore easily confused with domestic work. Raw materials in most men's businesses are not so easily used to alleviate an urgent family need.

Women staff identify other causes, most particularly women's greater responsibility for and commitment to the family's survival; their many domestic duties which make fixed hours of work difficult; and the greater importance of their social commitment within the community, which requires their presence and active assistance far more than of men at major events such as funerals or weddings. A senior woman staff member believes that the programme is unable to reach women as effectively as it would wish precisely because men and women are offered exactly the same type of assistance, with no account being taken of the very different problems men and women face in their working lives; and that assistance to ease these problems must be added as a major component of the programme's work with women, in order to enable them to increase their businesses' profitability.

Zaire

From 1982 to 1984 a joint UNHCR/ILO project was implemented to increase the incomes of Angolan refugees in three areas of the Bas-Fleuve settlement in Zaire. The land available to the refugees was limited and of poor quality, and incomes from agricultural production were inadequate for self-sufficiency. The project therefore aimed to develop non-farm activities to increase refugees' incomes.

To this end, producers' associations were formed, within a co-operative framework, each based on a specific activity. A total of 40 such associations were formed for approximately 14 different types of activities which included carpentry, fishing and fish-breeding, upholstering and mattress-making, bread-baking, soap-making, etc. Agricultural associations were assisted to process cassava grown on the refugees' farms. Most associations were provided with workshops, equipment and starting capital, and members given some training in book-keeping and co-operative management.

Associations developed around specific activities did not include women. Of the 40 associations listed, three are designated specifically as "Women's Activities". Project staff have reported that from its inception the project found it difficult to involve women. At first, the women on each of the three sites organised themselves into a large association and requested assistance for tailoring, beignet and mat-making to generate income. Each association was provided with a Women's Centre and given a small amount of basic materials to develop these activities. The scheme did not succeed for a variety of reasons: the group proved to be too large and therefore difficult to organise, and lacked good leadership; the women had to walk long distances to reach the centres; raw materials were difficult to obtain and expensive; the finished products had no ready market. But above all the major contraints which made it difficult to include women in the programme were women's lack of time, lack of education, and lack of appropriate skills.

In order to overcome some of these problems, a foreign volunteer was recruited in late 1983 to work with the women refugees and help them develop more profitable activities. A total of 80 women from the three sites organised into smaller groups for cassava processing, soap-making and baking. Technical training improved as groups hired technicians to teach them baking and soap-making. Dynamic women leaders on two of the sites provided much of the organisational skills. Women were still not easily able to attend business training sessions organised by the main project.

Funds for workshops and equipment and the working capital made available to the women's groups compare favourably with those granted to the other associations; but incomes generated as a result do not. As the volunteer reports: "... only a few groups have succeeded in making a substantial profit. For most groups, progress has been slow and, given these difficult circumstances, it must be accepted that there will not be many glamorous results.[13] In addition to the major constraints which faced the programme as a whole (too short an implementation period, isolation, poor transportation, difficulties in obtaining raw materials, and the low purchasing power of refugees), the women continue to face severe time constraints. As the report concludes: "With all they must do, the women need to be more practical (than the men); they cannot afford to waste their time. How can women come to a workshop and spend several hours a day for a very minimal gain? How can they justify their time when they have so many other things to do? They cannot, and this explains, above all, why there has only been a small number of women in the programme".[14]

Djibouti

Some thousands of refugees from Ethiopia have sought asylum in Djibouti since 1974. The largest influx occurred from 1977-79, and these rural refugees were accommodated in two holding camps. But over the past 10 years, and particularly since 1977, groups of refugees have continued to arrive in the country to settle spontaneously in the town and environs of Djibouti. Several thousands of refugees were voluntarily repatriated in 1983-84, but this movement back to their country of origin terminated at the end of 1984. In June of that year, a census established that there were a total of 15,220 refugees in the two camps, and a further 3,000-4,000 living in and around Djibouti-ville.

Refugees in the camps receive food aid, together with other basics such as shelter, water, medical care, etc. Several schemes have been developed to help the refugees, through vocational training and small-scale income generating schemes. These have included some relatively successful attempts to produce vegetables on irrigated land near existing wells. The number of refugee families assisted in this way have necessarily been very small and there is little or no potential for further development of such activities at present.

In 1982, a vocational training centre was opened in one camp to provide training for refugees awaiting resettlement in a second country of asylum, as well as to reduce the number of refugees in the town. The students (including some Djibouti nationals) who were given two year courses in automechanics and electrical installation were all male. In the same year, handicraft and tailoring workshops were established for women in the camps. The tailoring workshop in Ali Sabieh camp has a production centre which provides training and employment for young women refugees (and some nationals) all of whom

receive a fixed salary. In October 1984, six women refugees and two nationals were employed by the project to produce shirts, evening dresses, suits and local national costumes. Subsequently, an "open section" attached to the workshop and intended to provide production facilities for ex-trainees not employed by the project was temporarily closed. The workshop had 15 sewing machines, all trainees received good technical training, and the products were judged by a consultant to be of higher quality than those available in the local markets and therefore justifiably more expensive. However, the products aimed at a market which was already well served by imported goods, and hence sales were poor. A market survey to determine what types of high quality locally-made clothes were needed was subsequently recommended.

A handicraft workshop, located in Dikhil camp, involved 110 women at the end of 1984, all of whom worked in their homes after having attended an initial training course of five weeks. The women make a variety of traditional handicrafts which the project purchases from them after deducting the price of the raw materials provided. These traditional handicrafts compete in the tourist/expatriate market with similar items imported from Ethiopia which are much cheaper. Thus, at a local gift shop which provides the project with a sales outlet, not one item made by the project was sold in 1984! Refugees were not involved in either the purchase of raw materials or the sale of goods, and marketing has depended almost solely on the personal efforts of the project co-ordinator and expatriate clientele. The women continue to produce because they are "guaranteed" a market - but the project is faced with the problem of selling vast stocks of goods for which there is little demand.

Lesotho

Starting in 1983 the ILO, together with UNHCR, implemented a pilot project in Lesotho which aimed to provide loans and business training to refugees in order to assist them in developing small enterprises. The number of refugees in Lesotho is relatively small (somewhat less than 10,000), all come from the urban areas of the Republic of South Africa, and have had at least some years of primary education. Their period of exile ranges from very recent arrival to 20 years.

Out of the 17 businesses which were successfully assisted, only one woman received a loan through the project, and neither the relative success of her business nor her initial qualifications are documented. Nevertheless, the conclusions drawn from this pilot project are useful to review. Its assessment of women as a group with no entrepreneurial potential is important, most particularly as it was intended that this project should serve as a model for the possible development of similar projects elsewhere.

The project was based on an initial feasibility study carried out in 1982, when a sample group of 27 refugees of varying backgrounds were interviewed to assess skills, previous employment and business experience, present employment status, etc. Four women were included in the interviews; however, only one was employed: an elderly widow, formerly a trade union organiser, who had sole care of her six dependent children and who now worked as a cook in a restaurant in which she had a small part share. Two other women were single, unemployed and with some secondary schooling: one wished to continue her education, the other was attending a typing course. The fourth

woman was a mother separated from her two children; she was employed, had only primary education, was learning typing, and wished to find work to enable her children to join her in exile.

The interviews stimulated interest among refugees to submit project proposals. A total of 16 were submitted, by individuals and groups who intended to form co-operatives, and partnerships.

Much of the assistance was channelled through national institutions. Training workshops (each lasting a week) were conducted by the Lesotho Opportunities Industrialisation Centre, which also provided a pre and post-loan counselling scheme, together with a specially recruited Lesotho Project staff member. A system for small business loans was arranged through the Bank of Lesotho and operated on normal commercial principles under the guidance of a specially instituted Loan Committee. The involvement of a bank for the loan scheme was seen as essential, to provide long-term continuity but particularly in order for the project to be perceived by the refugees as purely a business scheme rather than a quasi charitable one.

By the end of 1984, 18 loans had been given for a total of 17 businesses and recipients constituted 50 per cent of the trainees who had been selected to attend the project's workshops. In March 1985, a project evaluation team drew broad conclusions about the profile of these refugees in business, compared to the average refugee in Lesotho: ".. refugee entrepreneurs are a mature group that has resided in Lesotho between five to ten years, with reasonably stable work history, some business experience, and predominantly male".[15] Because of the small numbers of refugees in Lesotho, only very few people can be said to be in this category which is judged suitable as potentially successful entrepreneurs. Project evaluators therefore assessed that as a result, the profile of future workshop trainees and loan applicants would alter considerably and might prove to be <u>far less likely to succeed as entrepreneurs</u>. "Compared to past applicants these people are rather younger, with a greater proportion of women (42 per cent) and have been in Lesotho for a lesser period of time emphasising once again that the number of refugees with viable business proposals is diminishing, that the standard profile of the refugees assisted by the project is changing, and therefore that a rigorously selective small business approach must be supplemented by a range of smaller income-generating activities as less entrepreneurial talent becomes available."

The evaluators stressed that a very clearly defined line must be drawn between welfare and business counselling for refugees if vigorous selection of entrepreneurs is to be applied, and that these two functions must be discrete and provided by different personnel, even for the recruitment of refugees selected to attend training workshops.

Inter alia, recommendations for future project development included "an extension ... from mainline business enterprise creation to smaller income-generating activities." The beneficiaries for this future development are described as "those who require training and other assistance to earn some money (income-generating activities) through very small-scale or part-time activities: these might be women refugees or wives of refugees, younger people, etc."

Kenya

Kenya has a relatively small but heterogeneous population. Refugees come from several countries in Eastern and Southern Africa, and have very diverse backgrounds, ranging from senior civil servants, students and business people to those with very limited employment skills and education. Almost all are based in Nairobi. It is estimated that only a proportion of refugees are registered, while an unknown number have come to Kenya without seeking refugee status. In a census conducted in 1981, there were 2,013 registered adult refugees, of whom 625 were women. Of the 250 single parents registered, 80 per cent were headed by women. Only 101 refugees came from rural backgrounds, and more than 25 per cent had been in Kenya for more than five years. Of the total adult population, the employment rate was 18.7 per cent, or 337, of whom 306 were male. Almost half the women refugees had had no previous paid employment, and 151 women had had no form of schooling. In the past two years there has been an increase in the number of refugees, largely from Uganda, partly from Ethiopia, and the refugee population is now estimated at 8,000.

In 1982 the ILO conducted a feasibility study on income-generating activities for refugees in Kenya, which reviewed previous assistance and proposed a variety of training schemes for self-employment and employment, together with income-generating activities which could provide at least partial self-support to handicapped refugees, "... the handicaps being mental, physical or social. Of these the statistically more important group, and that with better prospects of achieving self-support, is the socially handicapped. Most of these are mothers on their own with children for whom one income-generating possibility might be home-based production work, run on co-operative lines, through community women's groups, though this might not provide more than partial self-support."[16] As the study remarks elsewhere, "the fatherless families are considered the group most in need of assistance, while being among the most difficult to help".

Certainly women refugees have found it difficult to make use of counselling services. Not only do women find it difficult to leave their children for many hours at a time to seek advice from the various offices located in the centre of Nairobi, but they often do not speak any local or official languages. Thus the ECA reported in 1984 that "in Kenya or Uganda for example, refugees are expected to come to the counsellor with their own interpreters. This in Kenya meant that refugees have had to hire young boys who often cheat them out of a large proportion of their monthly allowance. The limited skills of amateur interpreters have often led to misrepresentation by the counsellors of the refugees' problems. Many women refugees keep away from counselling services due to these communications problems."[17]

In 1982, 500 refugees were receiving assistance in education or training. The number of women among those in vocational and technical training is not given, but some of the subjects listed can be regarded as being solely or mainly for women: 24 in home economics and secretarial training. The report points out that most female students were enrolled in private institutions "of doubtful quality" where training did not necessarily lead to the acquisition of marketable skills. At the same time, the most popular training courses were not necessarily the most appropriate: 42 were studying tailoring with a view to self-employment, although the market for tailors was most probably saturated; while those aiming to become secretaries would be competing for scarce jobs with nationals. The possibilities of employment as a result of the home economics training was not discussed. Language training for most refugees was judged to be inadequate.

An ILO study of the feasibility of certain activities is interesting in the suppositions it makes about women. One of the proposals is a loan scheme for small-scale businesses which is closely linked to an intensive training course of one year at a specially developed training centre 200 kms away from Nairobi, where accommodation would be provided for students, including those with families: a provision which would supposedly facilitate an intake of women heads of households. The selection of students and the type of training planned, would also seem to enable the inclusion of women, provided they had some basic education. Students, both male and female, would be divided for the purpose of training, into homogeneous groups according to previous experience and education, and to the type of business planned. Any refugee successfully completing the course would be eligible to apply for a business loan to a specially constituted committee consisting of selected government institutions, donor agencies and NGOs. An extension service would provide long-term support.

For refugees not wishing to develop their own enterprise, vocational and technical courses are proposed geared to local demand. For young women "other areas to consider include leatherwork, machine knitting, and for the future perhaps electronics assembly". In addition, small agricultural settlements for groups of families are suggested, to be run as commercial enterprises on rented land with the provision of loans and extension services. The proposed inclusion of refugees in public works projects (e.g. the labour-intensive building of access roads) would only include men refugees.

Proposed assistance geared specifically to women household heads centres around:

(a) The creation of a small settlement attached to the Refugee Reception Centre where inhabitants (who would also include the aged and the handicapped) would engage in various income-generating activities such as co-operative poultry raising; the cultivation of fruits and vegetables on individual plots (of about 0.1 acres) "to provide a part of subsistence needs"; and handicraft production (carpet-making, knitting, traditional items).

(b) Home-based production for single mothers living in Nairobi is also suggested, largely to provide incomes which will supplement UNHCR living allowances. "Because of the weight of their family responsibilities in some instances, only partial support may in those cases be feasible, but this is at least an improvement on their current situation of total dependence." The proposal stresses that "a review of experiences, aptitudes and potential working capacity in the light of family responsibilities" must be a first step to assistance so as to give appropriate support to those women with previous production experience, to provide training for others, and to identify "the least promising cases" as candidates for small settlement schemes. At the same time, the most marketable items for home production should be identified, with training provided if necessary: traditional handicrafts, envelope-making and cloth-dyeing are suggested, to be undertaken individually or in groups. It is suggested that the implementing agency should purchase the women's products and sell them to appropriate outlets, with a margin to cover project costs.

III. SOME COMMON FINDINGS

The experience of the projects described above can best be understood and assessed within the context of the overall problems which confront refugees and assistance programmes which aim for a "durable solution", i.e. the self-reliance of refugees in their host country. There are very few instances where more than a handful of refugees have achieved this much sought-after status. Internationally provided material assistance to refugees in holding camps or settlements may provide more or less satisfactorily for all or some basic needs. But the host countries can offer little material assistance in the areas which are most needed. They cannot absorb refugees into their workforce; and the agricultural land which can be made available to refugees, even if it is intended for long-term or semi-permanent settlement, is generally not adequate or sufficiently productive to provide the means to replace all food aid. This is particularly striking in the experience of settlements in the Sudan, which over ten years or more gradually allowed refugees to become only partially self-sufficient. Whether they worked seasonally on neighbouring farms or tilled their own land, refugees could not earn or grow enough to support themselves, while the drought of 1984 made them once again dependent for many months on food aid. Similarly, in Zaire the land available for refugee settlement is of too poor a quality to provide a means of livelihood, and the refugees remain to a large extent dependent on the provision of aid.

The prospects for refugee self-reliance in large holding camps, such as those in Somalia, are even less encouraging. These "temporary camps" have housed thousands of people, all totally dependent on external aid, for six years or more. The camps are both crowded and isolated by poor national infrastructure, and located in areas where there is limited potential for even partially self-supporting settlements through agricultural production.

The search for durable solutions, therefore, increasingly concentrates on the development of artisanal skills which serve the refugee community while providing employment, and small industries, linked to farming and non-farming activities. For both men and women, these have met with limited success, and reached only by a minority of the population. A refugee community can only support a certain amount of artisans, while all the difficulties facing the development of rural-based enterprises in African countries are compounded by those specific to refugee conditions. Settlements are generally isolated, far from markets and sources of raw materials, and transport facilities are poor and expensive. The refugees' own purchasing power is limited, while production of basic goods faces competition from those imported or locally made, or even distributed free to refugees.

In many ways, it is the presence of the aid agencies and the services they provide which has created far more opportunities for employment than the projects developed to promote self-employment. In one camp in Somalia in 1984, for example, approximately 2,000 refugees (out of an estimated total population of 30,000) were employed by a variety of agencies and institutions: for the delivery of health and education services, food handling and distribution, construction, reforestation and as watchmen, store-keepers and cooks. Only half that number (920) were being assisted through agricultural and non-agricultural income-generating projects (47 per cent women and 53 per cent men).*

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*The percentage of women participants is unusually high as this was the location of the ILO's IRCDP: the only project which worked solely with women refugees in camps.

Programmes for urban refugees have also found it difficult to provide access to regular sources of income which could replace refugees' dependence on monthly subsistance allowances. Employment opportunities are few, particularly if refugees do not speak the local or official languages, and only a small number have become successfully self-employed. Access to national training institutions is severely limited, and language training has not reached those who most need it.

The dependent attitude of the refugees themselves has frequently been identified as a major problem. Few projects can provide a substitute for the perceived security or the real value of regular cash or food aid, particularly if surplus food is received, which can be sold or exchanged for other necessities. In their alien environment, refugees have no security beyond the aid they receive. There are people who have usually lost all or most of their possessions and have undergone enormous risks to arrive at their place of refuge. Projects which aim to reduce their dependency and provide self-employment demand that refugees relinquish, at least partially, their secure subsistence base in exchange for activities which involve risk-taking in an uncertain situation, where the future is unknown.

In the majority of income-generating projects, the implementing agency and the refugee participants do not, therefore, share the same long-term objectives. The refugees need and want the income a scheme may provide, but they do not want to endanger their continued supply of food aid or regular cash allowance as a result of what is perceived as an additional income; while the aid agency, through the implementation of the scheme, wishes to create conditions in which refugees are less reliant on aid and accept the income in part as an alternative.

Thus, urban, educated refugees will apply for formal education or training courses which guarantee them a stipend while they are trainees, but revert to dependence on a reduced allowance once they have graduated, rather than seek employment or self-employment which would end this regular financial support. In holding camps, refugees remain extremely secretive about any earnings or resources, and even withdraw from project participation if they believe this may in any way reduce their eligibility for aid.

The temporary and insecure state of being a refugee encourages them to make the maximum use of whatever aid resources are available, and to deny whenever possible an ability to support themselves. This attitude is further encouraged by the fact that refugees, and most particularly women, are seldom involved in the major decisions which regulate their lives, and are powerless to influence what kind of aid they will receive;* how their camps or settlements will be organised; what types of development activities will be offered them; or even where water points or community centres will be located. They are forced to remain passive in matters which most affect them. They are recipients, and as such, can only afford to take a short-term view.

These factors, together with the objective fact of the temporary nature of a refugee situation, must influence the assistance given to women in vocational training for gainful employment. Training programmes for women refugees will of necessity be affected by their short-term view, as much as by their needs and specific problems they face as women and as refugees.

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*Even food aid can be inappropriate: e.g. dried beans which require lengthy cooking when firewood is extremely scarce and expensive.

All the projects reviewed have addressed themselves to women's need to earn an income. Urban projects have centred mainly around business creation through the provision of loans. Of the three such projects reviewed, only the Small-scale Enterprise Programme in Port Sudan actively sought to assist women household heads as a primary target group, and considered the very small and limited businesses women engage in as worth supporting and improving. The loans schemes in Lesotho and Kenya, on the other hand, identify women with families as generally not credit-worthy, not only because some of the constraints they face are recognised, but also because women's skills and background do not seem to conform to those of the "ideal entrepreneur" most likely to succeed in business. Project evaluations recommended that rather than promote women in the regular business-creation schemes, develop instead more welfare-oriented income-generating projects, in semi-sheltered environments, to enable women household heads to earn a small income to supplement their allowances.

There are important differences between the scheme in Port Sudan and those in Lesotho and Kenya. The business management training provided by the project is particularly suitable for illiterate women who have little time to attend counselling or training centres, and who also face some social constraints to visiting public places unattended. Trained female staff, who come from varied backgrounds and speak the refugees' own languages, make regular home visits to female clients during the loan payment period: they assist the women to prepare their monthly accounts, analyse the profitability of their business, and cost their production. They do not request women to visit their offices; staff actively seek out potential women beneficiaries and often make unsolicited calls to explain the kind of help the programme can offer.

In contrast, many loan schemes expect the refugees to take the initiative and visit counselling centres, and provide limited extension services which do not differentiate between the needs of men and women. Training takes place through workshops or formal courses, which women find impossible to attend, due to the lack of time, and child care facilities. The training centre proposed for refugees in Kenya, however, recommends that accommodation should be provided for trainees with families, which if child-care facilities are also provided may help overcome these practical problems. Similarly, the proposed training of homogenous groups, with curricula geared to their specific needs, could allow for the design of training suited to poorly educated or semi-literate women.

Most projects have tended to underestimate the entrepreneurial capabilities of women (particularly those with family responsibilities). While they have also identified practical problems which obstruct women's ability to engage single-mindedly in self-employment or wage employment, they have failed to address these constraints, as an integral part of the assistance offered. They have required women to conform to work patterns generally possible only for men, or in some cases proposed welfare-oriented strategies which cannot lead to economic self-reliance.

Assistance in holding camps, such as those in Somalia and Djibouti, or in refugee settlements such as those in Zaire or the Sudan, has similarly not addressed the underlying difficulties which face most women when they seek to earn an income. As a result, young unmarried girls, rather than women with dependent families, have benefitted. The Family Life Programme in Somalia is perhaps an example of one of the most comprehensive efforts to assist women refugees, with special training given to more than 200 women who subsequently

became government employees as trainers in non-formal education in the camps; and thousands of women refugees attending the courses offered. The overwhelming majority of students have been young girls with no formal education, for whom the programme has provided some basic literacy and home-making skills, and some opportunities to earn a small income in a semi-sheltered environment. Although the economic feasibility of some skills may be questioned, there is little denying the value of providing vocational skills to illiterate girls who are too old to go to primary schools. However drawbacks include the required daily attendance over a period of 12 months, and the lack of an extension programme to provide skills to women who are unable to follow such a schedule.

Similarly Action Aid's assistance in Somalia, and that of the project in Djibouti, have almost without exception included only young unmarried girls. Only one woman among the 50 trained by Action Aid was married with children. It not only drew on FLP graduates (which in itself precluded the inclusion of women with families) for its participants, but also required many months attendance at training sessions before any substantial income could be earned.

But lack of time is not the only factor which influences the participation of adult women in training schemes. The women engaged in soap production in the ILO's project in Somalia were far older (ages ranged from 35 to 50). These women were able to work for several hours daily at the production centre because their children no longer needed constant attention, and were old enough to perform domestic chores. But these women demonstrated clearly that they were not interested and had no time for literacy or management training sessions, for which they could see no practical or direct value. Only technical skills training was welcomed.

From the experience of the ILO farming project, it seems clear that women with heavy family responsibilities managed to engage in work which they valued and had requested, if it was organised to fit their other work and could bring them adequate financial returns. Irrigated vegetable cultivation is time-consuming, but the women were able to work their plots when it suited them (generally in the afternoon) and to bring their young children with them if necessary. Older children also assisted in cultivation. The experience in the Zaire settlement project is similar: women found no time to attend workshops for training, and could only afford to re-organise their daily work schedule for concrete activities which provided an income.

Most of the training and income-generating activities which have been developed in camps or settlements have reached only a handful of married women or single parents because the project design has not included provisions to lighten the women's workloads and child-care responsibilities, nor has it been adapted to women's work routines. At the same time, the projects have generally offered training for which an immediate use is not apparent to the women. Often they have promoted activities which generate very little income.

The obvious and severe external factors which limit the development of self-employment and small-scale enterprises in camps and settlements have already been mentioned. Yet within that context, most activities developed for women are based primarily on what is regarded as "suitable" work, rather than what is "profitable". The most extreme example of pointless activity perhaps, is that of the project in Djibouti, where over 100 women produce handicrafts which the project itself must buy as there is virtually no market demand. But agencies continue to teach women tailoring, handsewing,

embroidery and knitting, and encourage traditional handicraft production, ignoring both the concrete evidence of poor marketability, and the many negative experiences which have been documented over the past decade or more. Even agricultural projects, when they are made available to women, are often not geared to market demand. As for poor rural women everywhere in Africa, income-earning projects for women refugees must be based, first and foremost, on what is marketable and profitable, rather than on pre-conceived notions of what is appropriate. At the same time, women cannot be offered training for "non-traditional" occupations without a clear knowledge of how they will apply these. The experience in Sudan, where a woman trained as a carpenter was apparently unable to use her skills, and the similarly disappointing results for the women trained as sewing machine mechanics in Somalia, underscores the need for sound initial market research. And while it is conventional wisdom that vocational training should be linked to employment opportunities, it is particularly important to ensure that women trained in non-traditional skills are given assistance and support to establish themselves in their new occupations.

An important first step therefore in the design of training and income-earning schemes is a thorough and comprehensive survey of market demand for skills, products and services. At the same time, an inventory should be made of women's skills and their work experience, paid or unpaid. Most income-earning schemes for women tend to concentrate on artisanal skills at the expense of other types of work women do. In situations where women's major productive work in agriculture or livestock raising can no longer provide a livelihood, the skills women use in previously unpaid work may provide an effective basis for training. By upgrading and modernising these skills, often through the introduction of improved technologies, women could provide paid services to the community instead of unpaid services restricted to the household.

Projects must also take as their starting point a thorough understanding of the needs of the women for services and assistance. Most assistance offered to women, and particularly to women with children, is generally designed to meet a single need (e.g. a cash income, or better nutritional knowledge) while other needs, which may prevent or lessen the benefits of such assistance, are often ignored, unacknowledged or unknown. Training and assistance projects for women whose daily work encompasses a wide variety of tasks and responsibilities cannot isolate one need, or they will provide only part of the solution.

The use of women extension workers drawn from the refugee community, has been seen to contribute considerably to a better understanding of women's needs and the effective incorporation of them in the design of training and income-earning schemes. The training of women extension workers should not be carried out in an ad hoc manner. It should be properly planned and if necessary, provided by a national or specially created institution. This may require some months of attendance outside the camps or settlements. As a result, it is likely that the women willing and available to be trained as extension workers may be those without family responsibilities: mainly young unmarried women who will have relatively little authority in their community. The existence of women's organisations in refugee communities may help to make the work of extension agents more effective, and give them the support they require. It would be preferable if these organisations, rather than male camp officials or outside agencies, selected the extension trainees. It is even mutually beneficial if women's extension workers are closely linked or even

incorporated in women's organisations. The organisations' leaders are well placed to provide information and guidance, but they have little time at their disposal for such time consuming work. In addition, women's organisations should be assisted to improve the scope of their work, by providing leaders with simple management and leadership skills.

The creation of women's organisations by outside agencies is more problematical, however, particularly if financial support is offered and the organisations are created after the emergency phase is over and differences in resources and status have become established within the camps. But it is clear that if women refugees are to have any say in the organisation of a camp or settlement, and in the delivery of goods and services, they must be well-represented. From the start of a refugee influx or the development of a settlement, aid agencies should encourage the formation of women's organisations. More importantly, aid agencies and government officials at every level should be encouraged to consult with women refugees when they plan the organisation of structures and services.

The participation of women refugees as active decision-makers when camps or settlements are first established also encourages a greater commitment by the majority of adult refugees to their environment, and inevitably contribute to more successful efforts at self-help. "Self-help" schemes, as they are presently constituted, have generally been instigated by non-refugee officials or foreign aid workers, relatively late in the life of a camp or settlement, and designed and implemented by young, newly trained male refugee sommunity development workers. These have met with little enthusiastic participation particularly when refugees are asked to provide for themselves the services for which they were previously paid or received free.

Yet it must be accepted that although self-help schemes and a greater commitment to their present situation will be encouraged by the active participation of women refugees in decision-making, and their needs better addressed, the outcome of training programmes will continue to be influenced by the temporary nature of refugees' situations and outlook. Refugees' long-term objectives do not generally relate to their lives as refugees. As Christensen found in Somalia in 1981, refugees were "expressing great nostalgia for their homes and previous way of life, be it sedentary agriculturalists, urban-dweller, nomad or semi-nomad"[18] and all but one of a sample of 150 households said they would return home immediately, if it were possible. Thus ownership, or even self-management, of a small-scale business which will exist for only as long as refugees stay in the camp, may not be seen as a need, let alone a goal to be achieved through training. Only the acquisition of the technical and managerial skills required for production and self-employment will be seen as useful and applicable in the long run.

In this regard, the ultimate objective of the self-reliance of an assistance scheme must be mutually agreed upon and planned from the start. There should be a commitment on the part of the women refugees to participate in both technical and managerial skills training before the project is implemented. This can only be achieved if the participants are actively included in the design of the scheme, so that the necessary assistance is provided (e.g. child-care facilities), and implementation suitably geared to the women's daily work routines.

Donor assistance to refugee self-reliance programmes has generally been characterised by short-term funding which requires as many refugees as possible being reached in as short a time as possible: a funding philosophy

shaped by the initial emergency situation. Donor requirements have often placed severe constraints on the types of income-earning schemes developed, and the quality of assistance offered has suffered when the need for quantity and speedy delivery becomes the over-riding concern. The haste imposed by the short funding cycles encourages an undue emphasis on the provision of technical expertise by project staff and discourages the participation of beneficiaries, the careful gathering of data, and a considered and sensitive approach to overall project implementation. The experiences of projects in Zaire and Somalia have highlighted this problem: in both cases, management training for women suffered considerably from the short time allowed for project implementation. As a result, the long-term sustainability of the activities established were not assured, which in turn affected the potential replicability of the scheme. In the case of the Somalia project, funding was granted for periods of six months to a year at a time. While in contrast, the programme in Port Sudan, which has had considerable success in its training and loan scheme for illiterate women, was able to gather data carefully over two years and spend a further six months for intensive staff training, before the project was implemented and the first loan application approved.

Funds granted overall for non-agricultural income-earning schemes have also tended to be relatively small in relation to need, particularly as they are intended to benefit large groups of refugees. Funds for women's activities are often earmarked as additional small allocations within the total made available for larger projects aimed at male-headed families. As a result, women's income-generating projects have tended to be under-capitalised and this has further encouraged the concentration on activities such as handicrafts or small-scale poultry raising, which require little capital outlay, provide minimal incomes as a result, and have no potential for growth.

IV. SOME GUIDE-LINES

Information

Most refugee situations are characterised by a lack of knowledge of the female population: their skills, resources, background and needs. Until these are known, training or any other type of assistance cannot be successfully geared to meet women's needs or to use effectively their skills and knowledge. At the outset of a refugee influx, a thorough baseline survey of women refugees must be undertaken. The following factors should particularly be considered:

(a) Needs: Women refugee's needs will change as urgent survival needs are replaced by those which emerge in a stable situation. An initial needs assessment will require updating on a regular basis. Extension workers could be trained to carry out this work, and the beneficiaries should participate throughout.

(b) Skills. In the rare instances where women's skills have been assessed, only those linked to paid employment, or other sources of income have been included. Skills survey should cover all aspects of women's productive work, whether this is paid or unpaid, directed to serve a market or geared to subsistence. Women have many skills, and a careful assessment should indentify those which are at present unrecognised because they are unpaid, but which could usefully be upgraded and modernised, both to provide an income and lighten workloads.

A comprehensive approach to needs assessment

To earn an income is only one of women refugee's needs. Training and assistance projects which concentrate solely on this need in isolation and ignore others which influence women's ability to earn an income will greatly limit the benefits of both training and assistance. Provisions must be made in project design and implementation to help women overcome practical contraints to gainful employment.

The most obvious contraints relate to women's workloads, the supervision of their young children, and stereotyped attitudes of others regarding women's roles and appropriate occupations.

(a) Child-care facilities. Child-care facilities could be provided in various ways, depending on what is most suitable to local conditions. A child care centre could be attached to the training/workplace. Where urban refugees live in close proximity, selected women in the community could be trained and employed as child-minders. Whether in urban areas, camps or settlements, small day-care centres located where the women refugees live are more suitable than large centrally located ones which require additional demands on women's time and mobility. If it is necessary for women to attend resident training courses, the need for a child-care facilities and accommodation for the women's families should be anticipated. These different types of services however would obviously provide employment opportunities and possibly serve as training centres in themselves for skilled child-minders and kindergarten teachers. They would also provide a much-needed service to the community.

(b) Reducing workloads. Services such as cereal grinding and other forms of food transformation plus regular water deliveries are obvious areas of concentration. Whenever possible training and assisting women to perform these services should be promoted, thereby increasing their income-earning opportunities.

Women's participation in project design

Assistance which aims to address women's needs can only be achieved if these needs are known and understood. The people who know their needs and contraints best are the women themselves. The participation of women beneficiaries in the initial design of income-earning schemes can ensure that the training and assistance involved are relevant and suited to their working lives and family responsibilities. Initial participation will also stimulate a commitment, to the project and various aspects of training involved.

Mutual objectives

Commitment by participants to a training and income-earning scheme cannot be implied. Given the unnatural conditions in which refugees and aid projects are placed, and the resultant short-term view these encourage, there must be mutual understanding and agreement on the ultimate objectives of the project from the start, which can be reached by discussions with the women beneficiaries, the extension workers and women's leaders. In addition, the

different training and follow-up elements (technical, managerial, counselling) and their function must be clearly understood; and, inter alia, participants selected on the basis of their willingness to undertake this training.

Partial aid

In some situations where long-term objectives or business development and self-employment can have little or no relevance to women refugees and it may be feasible to consider continued management support to small-scale enterprises which are self-sustaining and provides a good income for participants. Groups of women could participate in turn, thus enabling them to acquire some technical skills and perhaps to accumulate some capital to invest in activities for which no assistance can be made available.

Training

Many training programmes offer women refugees skills which are unmarketable or provide only a marginal and irregular income. Vocational training programmes can only be useful if the skills women are taught are in demand. It is vital that a thorough review of the market demand for services and products is undertaken before a training programme for employment or self-employment is planned. Vocational training should not be gender specific, but it must be guided by market demand and employment opportunities, and if there are feasible opportunities for women in "non-traditional" occupations, measures should be taken to develop the appropriate skills and know-how.

For many reasons (lack of time, acute and immediate needs for incomes, the temporary nature of their situation, etc.) women can only give priority to activities which are linked to an immediate and practical objective. Training programmes therefore should be linked directly to concrete productive goals. For the majority of women refugees, it is more effective to combine training with the production of goods and/or services from the outset, rather than on training which is intended to lead to income earning at a later date, when training is completed.

Employment opportunities

Employment opportunities are created in camps and settlements by the services provided by government and aid agencies. The majority of those employed, however, are men. There is now considerable accumulated experience on the employment needs which arise in the establishment and organisation of a camp or settlement. An overall assessment should be made at the outset of project design, of the ways in which these opportunities could be made more accessible to women, with supporting training schemes designed to provide them with skills which will inevitably be in demand.

Credit

Although refugee loan schemes do not generally require collateral or a guarantor (requirements which normally limit non-women refugee's access to credit) women nevertheless are seldom included, largely because they have

little formal education; the businesses they propose or operate are very small in scale, and the benefits seen as marginal (even if the businesses serve to support large families). The presence of formal institutions such as banks on specially created loan committees further hampers grants of loans to women. The successful experience of the Small-Scale Enterprise Programme in Port Sudan should be considered in the future design of loan schemes which could help women entrepreneurs, most particularly the accessibility of very small loans which can serve to increase business profitability by up to 100 per cent; and the home-based training and support services provided by specially trained female extension staff to enable women to acquire business organisation and management skills.

Counselling and extension services

A new approach must be developed to ensure that counselling and extension services are able to meet women refugee's needs.

(a) Counselling services for urban refugees. From the very low attendance figures recorded it is clear that these services as they are presently organised, do little to help women. An outreach system should be developed, employing female staff who speak the refugees own languages, to visit women in their homes. These extension workers should be drawn from the refugee communities, and trained for the specific situation in which they are to work, with the use of specially prepared support materials. Counselling officers based in a central office could provide support to the newly trained counsellors.

(b) Extension services in camps and settlements. Particularly in large camps and settlements, a well developed extension service is necessary if women's wide range of needs are to be met satisfactorily through training and income-earning schemes. Training of extension workers, who should be drawn from the community, cannot be ad hoc: it may be necessary to conduct at least some of the training in a national (or specially created) institution, before the trainees return to their camps for further in-service training supervised by qualified trainers. While basic educational qualifications may not be necessary, trainees maybe of necessity, young unmarried women with no immediate family responsibilities. The little authority which these young women command in their community can be increased through the institutional support given them by women's organisations, or from women's leaders. Wherever possible, women extension trainees should be selected by women's leaders or organisations, rather than male officials or external agencies.

Women refugee's organisation

The important role of women's organisations must be stressed and every assistance possible given to the leaders to make their work effective. Women's leaders will generally have heavy family responsibilities, and their services will be voluntary. Training provided for them, therefore, should be on-site and geared to suit their working day. Leadership training and communications skills should be stressed together with basic training in group

organisational methods, so that they may assume overall co-ordination and responsibility for the services being established.

Co-ordination of training and income-generation schemes

In many refugee situations, numerous small training schemes are developed by a variety of agencies for many purposes. The result is an un-coordinated and diffused effort which does not encourage successful replicability. Efforts should be made among aid agencies to encourage a consistent and coherent approach to skills development for women refugees.

Time allocated for project implementations

Generally, the time allowed for the design, preparation and implementation of income-earning schemes for women refugees, is far too short. In fact, it is often shorter than the time allocated for similar projects for groups in settled, non-refugee communities, which can best be explained by the fact that long-term refugee aid is often born out of an emergency situation which requires a swift response. A clear distinction must be made between the needs created at the time of a major refugee influx and those in a stable environment where assistance is geared to medium or long-term development projects. Given the extraordinary conditions and needs of refugee situation (whether rural or urban), refugee training and income-earning projects will probably take more time to develop successfully than those in a normal environment. The time required will vary, but this must be geared to the needs of each situation, and not unrelated and external factors.

Programme delivery

Vocational training, is often provided by national training institutions. While attendance maybe possible, and desirable benefit these institutions are not normally able to provide training on the large scale needed, at a level and of a type suited to the majority of women refugees.

Camps and settlements create new, artificial communities which have a wide variety of special training needs, many of which are common to all such refugee situations. But each refugee situation too, has a specificity according to prevailing conditions and environment, the origins and backgrounds of the refugees, etc. In the majority of cases, therefore, special institutional arrangements will often be necessary to provide training for extension workers and counsellors. Child-minders, kindergarten teachers, etc., and, for trainers, in areas of business management and technical skills.

It is equally important in developing training programmes to assess the skills and resources available, nationally and among the refugee population, and to build on these.

Training materials

While there are basic training needs which are common to many refugee situations, it is important to stress that each situation is also very different, and that training materials must therefore be specially designed to

suit each specific situation, for use in both training institutions and in the field context. Most particularly, localised materials must be developed for use by extension workers and counsellors.

The special training materials for women beneficiaries of income-earning schemes should equally be geared to the women's present environment, and the advantage be immediately evident. Pre-literacy training materials which are relevant to the work involved in the income-earning programmes can do much to encourage interest in functional literacy, and even management training materials can be introduced at this stage. Literacy training, therefore, should be localised and geared not only to the women's specific situation but to the particular activity in which they are engaged.

Tranferring knowledge

There is a general tendency in every refugee situation to "re-invent the wheel": knowledge and experience of training needs and methods gained in one situation are often not referred to in other situations, because they are not easily available and opportunities for possible application of successful experiences (with whatever modifications may be necessary) are lost as a result. Knowledge rests with people as much as in the prevailing literature but project managers and field workers are less frequently brought together to share their experience than are researchers who have had little continuous field experience.

There is a need to draw on practical experiences to improve the quality of this assistance, and for co-ordination within and between agencies. To this end, comprehensive data (which should be continuously updated) on the range of vocational training schemes being implemented for women refugees should be centralised for use by field workers and project planners. The exchange of information among project managers and other field workers should also be encouraged in projects through workshops or study tours, etc.

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